



July 2011

Dear Westford Residents,



Jodi Ross
Town Manager
978-692-5500

jross@westfordma.gov
www.westfordma.gov/tm

**Have a safe and
happy summer!**

Special Town Meeting is
October 17, 2011.

Watch Meetings Online



www.westfordcat.org

Visit
www.westfordma.gov
for current news and
information.

Best wishes to Maureen Barry, who retired after 29 years of service to the J.V. Fletcher Library, and Rita Shipley, who recently retired from our Town Clerk's office after almost 9 years of service. Thank you ladies for all of your contributions – you certainly helped us evolve and improve through your tireless contributions to our town, and I wish you the best in your well-earned retirements.

Congratulations to Nancy Cook who was recently honored as one of 100 women receiving recognition at the Eighth Annual Massachusetts Unsung Heroines event in the state house, by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. This organization recognizes local citizens throughout the Commonwealth for outstanding contributions in their communities. Nancy serves on our Council on Aging, our Permanent Town Building Committee, on Westford Academy Alumni Association, on the Friends of Billy Duggin Scholarship Committee, and she recently volunteered to organize a group of citizens and town officials who are planning a 911 Memorial Event to honor those who lost their lives during that tragic day. Please join me in expressing my heartfelt thanks and congratulations to Nancy, along with my best wishes to her and her family.

On June 23rd, we held our first semi-annual Strategic Planning Retreat at Kimball Farms, which was deemed a success. This event was designed to improve communication between town board members, town staff, and our residents, to help identify town-wide policy needs, and assist with prioritization of town-wide issues. Several of the topics we discussed included pedestrian and bicycle safety, town center parking, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail parking, new construction projects in town and the effect on local services, financial issues facing our town, health insurance, capital needs, public works initiative, cell towers, and acquisition or disposition of town facilities. We have much information related to this event on our website and we will be following up with a report to the Board of Selectmen at their July 26th meeting. www.westfordma.gov/tm/retreat

The town has been meeting with its unions in an attempt to reach agreement on health plan design changes, which will result in lowered premiums for both the employee and the town. The Governor just approved legislation aimed to assist towns in this process. The Board of Selectmen adopted this legislation at their July 12th meeting, and after the state completes the rules and regulations surrounding the implementation of this new act, we will begin meeting with our unions again to continue the process. It is projected that these new changes will save the town approximately \$500,000 per year, which will help us to reduce expenses and preserve services during these difficult economic times.

Although Fiscal Year 2012 is just beginning, we are already diligently working on our budgets for Fiscal Year 2013. The Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Capital Planning Committee, department heads and I are poised to work together to maintain services as much as possible, while absorbing additional state aid cuts, as we have for the past several years. Our Budget Solutions Task Force will begin meeting again soon to assist us with policy recommendations to protect our fiscal future.

The Board of Selectmen opened the fall town meeting warrant, which is scheduled for October 17, 2011. Citizen petition articles are due to the Town Clerk's office by September 7th.

I hope you are relaxing with loved ones, and enjoying these gorgeous summer days.

Sincerely,



Town Manager's Newsletter

Water Department News

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Summer is finally here!

It's July and with the hot weather comes increased water usage – generally for lawn irrigation. As of May 1 the town has been under a Stage I (Voluntary) odd/even outdoor watering use restriction. With everyone's cooperation in conserving water we may be able to avoid the need to raise the water conservation stage - and the accompanying stricter water use restrictions. For more information on allowable water usage under each conservation stage - and helpful tips on how to conserve water - visit the Water Department website (www.westfordma.gov/water). The current water conservation stage is reported on the website.

How to connect to Town Water and associated charges for a single family house.

The first step is to call the Water Department. We need to check the system maps to determine if your property has frontage to a water main for connection.

If there is an existing water main, an applicant needs to fill out an application and hire an excavating contractor. The Water Department is not allowed to recommend a contractor, but there are several listed in the local phone book.

It is the responsibility of your contractor to excavate the trench from the connection point to the foundation wall. It is necessary to give the Water Department several days notice prior to commencing the work in order to give your contractor the time to coordinate with our foremen.

The Water Department will supply the materials and labor to connect your service line to the water supply, bring it into your home, and set your water meter.

The home owner will need a plumber to do two things: connect the home plumbing to the water meter and disconnect the well. The well can be set up for landscape watering, but it is not allowed to remain connected to the domestic system!

The excavation contractor is responsible for back filling the trench and any necessary loaming and seeding.

What are the fees?

The Application fee is \$25

An estimate of installation charges is \$1100

The System Development Charge is \$2700

A check for \$3825 is needed prior to installing the water connection

The applicant must agree to pay any additional charges - if they arise - and will receive a refund if the actual cost is less than the estimate.

Customer comments.

We would love to hear how we are doing! In an effort to continually improve our quality of service we've added a field on our website (www.westfordma.gov/water) to allow you to send us your comments. Simply click on "Comments" on the left hand side of the page directly under "Service Information" and fill out the form. Don't worry, we can still be reached the old fashioned way at 978-692-5529. We welcome your feedback as this provides us with valuable information on what we're doing right, and how we can improve. Please note that this comments area is for general service and non-emergency issues only. For emergencies or water quality issues please contact the Department at 978-692-5529 (or for after hours emergencies call the Police Dispatcher at 978-692-2161).



Water Hardness

My dishes have a residue after cleaning.

Recently, some water customers have noticed the presence of white spots, streaks, or scale on their dishes. This is frequently the result of water hardness, and in fact the Water Department has observed an increase in the level of water hardness in certain areas of town over the last few months. It appears that water from the recently on-line Stepinski well has contributed to an increase in general water hardness within some areas of town (areas served by the Nutting facility - mostly the northeast sections of town).

What is water hardness?

Hardness in drinking water is generally caused by the presence two non-toxic minerals: calcium and magnesium. The term "hard" comes from the fact that it is harder to create soap suds – and therefore harder to wash dishes. Conversely, "soft" water creates soap suds more easily. Another effect of hard water is the presence of whitish spotting, streaks, or scale on dishes.

Westford Water hardness levels.

Until recently, water treated by the Westford Water Department has generally been considered as "moderately hard" (between 61-120 mg/L), and this remains unchanged for areas of town served by the Forge Village treatment plant. However, due to the influence of the Stepinski well, hardness levels up to around 135 mg/L have been detected in tap water in some areas served by the Nutting Road facility. Water with hardness levels between 121-180 mg/L is characterized as "hard". Note that 135 mg/L is near the lower end of the "hard" range.

Is hard water safe to drink?

Yes. Although not aesthetically pleasing with regards to dishes, water hardness does not present a health issue.

What can I do to reduce the effects of hardness in my water?

There are several commercially-available products that can reduce the spotting, streaking, or scaling effects of hard water on dishes such as Glisten, Finish, or Jet-Dry (to name a few). Additionally, check the dishwasher manual for the appropriate type of detergent or setting to use. Many dishwasher manufacturers specify certain brands or types of detergent (powder or liquid) and may have adjustable settings for the level of water hardness.

A water softener can also help to reduce or eliminate the effects of water hardness. Softeners work by exchanging the hardness minerals with either sodium or potassium. Although the amount of sodium or potassium is relatively insignificant, you may want to check with your doctor if on a restricted diet. Water softener equipment can also be expensive to install and maintain, and will add salt to the environment. By installing the softener only on the hot water line you can save maintenance costs (by using less salt and extending the life of the softening resin).

What is the Water Department doing in response to the increased hardness?

Water hardness is naturally occurring, not a health risk, and large-scale treatment is currently cost prohibitive. However, we are monitoring the hardness level very carefully, and have noticed a downward trend in levels coming from the Stepinski well – which may suggest a future decrease in your tap water hardness, and perhaps even a return to previous levels. We will continue to investigate possible solutions to the increased hardness levels, and update the Water Department website with any new information.



Library News

1,500 Westfordians – so far - have signed on to experience Novel Destinations, the Outer Limits of the Twilight Zone and One World, Many Stories by signing up for our Adult, Teens and Tweens, and Children's Summer Reading Programs. By offering 28 programs and events the Library widens Westford's world as children hobnob with the Sox's Wally the Green Monster, teens and tweens spar like Jedi Knights and adults enter the world of "CSI" with a forensic scientist. It's never too late to join in on the fun as every week of the summer is like a "staycation" when you visit the Fletcher Library.

Westford Residents can help the Town save money by signing up to receive email notifications from the library! Email notices – which alert you that you have items on hold or remind you that you have returns - save the Library money on postage, supplies and staff time. Thank you.

<http://www.westfordlibrary.org>